

PROJECT OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (POGI)

FY 2015 J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative (Stevens Initiative)

ECA-ECAPE-15-001

Office of Citizen Exchanges

The POGI guidelines apply specifically to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued by the Office of Citizen Exchanges, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) for the FY 2015 J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative (Stevens Initiative). Proposals must conform to the NOFO, the Guidelines stated in this document, and the standard Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Applications not adhering to the conditions set forth herein may be deemed technically ineligible. These guidelines are specific to the program mentioned above and are IN ADDITION TO the Standard Guidelines outlined in the PSI. If there is a perceived disparity between the standard and program specific Guidelines and the program information supplied in the accompanying NOFO, the NOFO is to be the dominant reference.

I. STATEMENT OF WORK

This solicitation supports the implementation of the J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative (Stevens Initiative), a multilateral public-private partnership. The J. Christopher Stevens Fund (Stevens Fund), the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (MacArthur Foundation), the U.S. Department of State, and the Kingdom of Morocco are the Initiative's founding partners. Increased connectivity is inspiring global citizenship, driving young people to seek connections with peers outside of their communities, and encouraging them to tackle local and global challenges. In November, 2014, Vice President Biden announced the United States' commitment to encouraging a generation of globally-minded youth, when he launched the Stevens Initiative at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Morocco. The Stevens Initiative is a multilateral public-private partnership that will strengthen engagement between young people in the Middle East and North Africa and in the United States as a lasting tribute to the legacy of Ambassador Chris Stevens. The Stevens Initiative will use technology and online tools to achieve the largest-ever increase in people-to-people educational, professional, and cultural exchanges between the United States and the Middle East and North Africa. Through intensive, structured online engagements between youth at various education levels, the Stevens Initiative will equip more than one million youth with the skills and capacities they need to succeed in the 21st century and lessen the potential for global misunderstanding. ECA requests that the award recipient carry out the responsibilities listed below in its administration of the Stevens Initiative. ECA expects to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with the award recipient who will administer the Initiative. It is anticipated that this cooperative agreement should begin on or about June 30, 2015, and the award period will be 30 months in duration.

In a cooperative agreement, ECA is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. These activities and the roles and responsibilities of the Department and your organization are detailed below.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Given the complexity of the Stevens Initiative, qualified organizations that are interested in applying are strongly encouraged to contact the following State Department Officer before submitting a proposal:

Mr. Brent Beemer
beemerbt@state.gov
(202) 632-6163

ECA must be consulted in the performance of all activities, especially in the resolution of any issues that may arise.

The award recipient will be responsible for:

- 1. *Manager and Donor Accountability.*** The award recipient is expected to act as the Managing Partner for the Stevens Initiative. As part of this role, the award recipient is to hire sufficient staff to support the implementation and monitoring of the Stevens Initiative and of all projects under the Stevens Initiative brand. The award recipient is to exercise full financial oversight and provide reporting to foreign governments, foundations, companies, and private donors.
- 2. *Programmatic Support.*** To support the programmatic activities of the Stevens Initiative, the award recipient is expected to provide project management and advisory board facilitation. In addition, the award recipient is expected to issue subawards through open competitions to support virtual exchange programming that meets program goals and objectives, expands access to new demographics, builds capacity to reduce cost-per-participant, and conduct research to form the basis for comparative evaluations across different programming models and impact assessments of new experiments in the field. Any funds awarded by the U.S. government are expected to be expended according to the terms and conditions of the award and applicable federal regulations. The award recipient is expected to monitor the progress, including fiscal management, of awarded projects with regular reporting of results to ECA. The award recipient is also expected to document and share best practices with the Department and the virtual exchanges community about the impact of virtual exchanges.
- 3. *Research and evaluation.*** Identify existing, and track emerging, best practices for virtual exchanges at the secondary and post-graduate levels by conducting a landscape analysis of virtual education and other communications platforms, and comparative evaluations across different programming models; be aware of, and conduct impact assessments of, new initiatives in virtual exchanges.
- 4. *Coordination of Partnerships and Major Stakeholders.*** The Stevens Initiative is unique in that the initial funding by the U.S. government is envisioned as a starting point for the program. Outside private and public organizations along with foreign governments are pledging support and funding to enhance the Stevens Initiative once it starts. The award recipient will be the coordinating agent for all of these entities (including the State Department). A successful program plan will include a governing structure that allows all of the entities to have a voice in the implementation and expansion of the Stevens Initiative.

- ***Website and Media Manager.*** The award recipient is to develop content for and maintain the Stevens Initiative's website and other associated media and materials. As the managing partner, the award recipient is to conduct all communications, outreach, and marketing activities to promote the Stevens Initiative.
- **Open Competition(s) for subawards for the FY 2015 Initiative:**

The Stevens Initiative will be focused on educators and students at the secondary and post-secondary levels. The Initiative seeks to implement a variety of virtual, blended and in-person exchanges that can demonstrate the capability of new communications technologies. Blended exchanges combine elements of virtual and in-person exchanges into one complete program. The subaward competition should allow potential subrecipients to submit proposals for these programs.

NOTE: This solicitation is not seeking an organization to directly implement exchanges, but rather provide an administrative base to host competitions among outside groups for subrecipients to provide the content related proposals.

The major components of the program for subrecipients are as follows:

- Implementing and facilitating virtual and in-person exchange programming and activities that will support international dialogue, the exchange of ideas, enhanced learning opportunities, and the creation of collaborative projects between people in the U.S. and in the Middle East and North Africa;
- When designing U.S. government funded open competition (s) for subawards, sub-applicants should propose a structure to encourage creative activities that bring people together for discussion and problem solving that fully exploit the power of advanced communications technologies, including programs that blend virtual and in-person exchanges.
- For educational institutions, designing an interactive online curriculum composed of stand-alone, theme-based units that will allow for flexibility in terms of start dates for participating schools/youth centers; curriculum should be accessible for participants with disabilities;
- Providing program materials and support to U.S. Embassies in countries where the subrecipient has limited-to-no capacity to facilitate the smooth integration of selected schools, youth centers, or organizations into virtual, blended and in-person exchange activities;
- Developing an application process for schools, youth centers and organizations in the United States and overseas, in coordination with in-country partners and embassies (for overseas schools/youth centers or organizations);
- Developing a recruitment process that ensures a diverse range of participants, including girls, underrepresented populations and the disabled, See Diversity Statement in the Proposal Submission Instructions for further information;

- Providing educators, mentors, or other participants with specialized online training modules in digital dialogue, online media sharing, and proper online community conduct in order to prepare them to guide students through the curriculum units. In-person trainings are allowable, but not required;
- Guiding, moderating, and encouraging rich, curriculum-based discussions and activities among program participants with the intention to create sustainable dialogue or ongoing engagement;
- Identifying and securing experts on topics related to curriculum unit themes who can serve as guest speakers or who can help strengthen the dialogue or engagement among the participants;
- Grouping or matching teams, of students in U.S. schools/youth centers or U.S. organizations with overseas counterparts to produce theme-based projects for each curriculum unit or activity that is relevant to their schools and communities;
- Conducting community outreach and engagement whereby participating youth and youth leaders reach out to their surrounding communities, not only to educate community members and share experiences, but also to ask questions of community leaders and learn what communities are doing with the various project themes;
- Disseminating and sharing the final collaborative projects with broader audiences;
- Collaborating with State Department bureaus, Public Affairs Sections (PAS) at U.S. Embassies, and in-country partners (where applicable) to identify participating schools/youth centers and organizations, coordinate program activities, and track participation;
- Managing all financial aspects of the grant;
- Electronically submitting monthly updates to the ECA program office that describe current and upcoming program activities;
- Formulating an evaluation plan that links program outcomes to project objectives and defines concrete, observable activities that demonstrate progress to the desired result; and
- Developing a plan for continued electronic communication and activities among schools/youth centers after the award expires.

Under ECA's guidance, the award recipient should develop transparent, merit-based competitions for U.S. organizations to administer projects with the Middle East and North Africa. The competitions should invite proposals that support building innovative solutions that harness the power of virtual exchange platforms to enhance the quality and effectiveness of collaborative engagement between the people of the United States and the Middle East and North Africa. The award recipient may partner with one or more organizations in the Middle East and North Africa to manage the Stevens Initiative. Note: ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposed project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the program's

needs and availability of funds. In addition, ECA reserves the right to adjust and/or add additional countries and/or regions should conditions change in a partner country and/or if other countries and/or regions are identified as viable alternatives and/or Department priorities.

ECA will provide the U.S. government funding for the awarded proposals in these competition(s);

The award recipient's proposal should describe a process for soliciting, reviewing, and recommending proposals for approval by ECA. This process, including draft solicitation documents, should be presented for ECA approval at least three weeks prior to the opening date of the competition.

The award recipient should also describe a screening/selection process to be approved by ECA. The process should include clearly identified review criteria, which will form the basis of a merit-based selection of proposals. This process should allow for organizations to be selected and notified as quickly as possible.

The award recipient should respond to queries from potential applicant organizations by phone or electronically.

The award recipient should conduct a technical review of all proposals received for basic eligibility and completeness. Proposals should be shared with ECA upon request.

The award recipient will arrange a review of proposals by panels. The award recipient should recruit and select appropriate academic and professional experts to review proposals, based on the approved review criteria. The award recipient should provide ECA with information about the scheduling and composition of selection panels at least four weeks before the meetings are scheduled to convene. Representatives of the State Department, the J. Christopher Stevens Fund, and the MacArthur Foundation, may serve as observers and resources at the panel meetings, including to provide information about program goals. The award recipient employees may facilitate and observe proposal review committees, but may not serve as voting members.

The award recipient will submit the slate of proposals recommended by the review committees to ECA for final selection. The award recipient will provide ECA with one electronic copy of each recommended proposal.

The award recipient will prepare selection notifications for selected and alternate proposals as well as for unsuccessful applicants. The text for all notifications must be approved by ECA. The award recipient will send notifications to all selected and alternate institutions as well as unsuccessful applicants, informing them of their status in a timely manner. The award recipient will respond to queries from applicants about awards after selection.

The award recipient will issue subaward agreements to the U.S. organizations whose projects are selected for awards and will provide funds to these organizations for administration. Prior to the issuance of a subaward agreement, the award recipient must determine that the recipient institution has a financial accounting system, policies, procedures, and personnel that are consistent with requirements for administering and disbursing U.S. government funds. The award recipient will maintain fiscal and programmatic responsibility for the projects administered by the subrecipient institutions.

U.S. Embassy and State Department Involvement:

- The State Department is expected to provide institutional guidance to the award recipient regarding the overall management of this Initiative. The State Department is also expected to provide advice and important input and analysis into the design and implementation of new activities under the Stevens Initiative.
- The State Department is expected to support the Stevens Initiative in all major events related to the Initiative, and collaborate with the partners to find appropriate media outlets and venues (such as conferences and other events) to publicize and amplify the Stevens Initiative's objectives, outcomes, and activities.
- The State Department is to support the award recipient's lead in outreach to the private sector, civil society, governments, and multilateral institutions.
- To the extent appropriate, within State Department capacity and authorities and aligned with State Department priorities, The State Department is expected to work within the Department to contribute resources to the development of this Initiative, including vetting new potential partners.
- In those countries or territories where a subaward recipient(s) has minimal capacity and/or there are no in-country partners, eligible U.S. Embassies may elect to participate in the Stevens Initiative at any time during the award period. The Embassies may serve as the in-country partners, collaborating with the subaward recipient to identify and select the overseas secondary schools, youth centers, organizations, and American Corners, connect them to a virtual platform, and provide general oversight and coordination of in-country program activities.
- In order to be responsive to developing situations worldwide as well as key foreign policy priorities, U.S. Embassies must be afforded the opportunity, to collaborate with the subaward recipient(s) at any time during the award period to engage schools of their choosing in the existing virtual exchange.
- **Please note:** Subaward applicants that wish to engage Iranian schools or organizations must consult with the Iran Office at the U.S. Consulate in Dubai about this possibility and the logistics involved prior to submitting their proposals. Please contact the ECA Program Office for contact information (listed at the bottom of the document). Please see further information on Iran in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.
- The award recipient must regularly update the ECA program officer, NEA regional bureau, and relevant U.S. Embassies on the implementation of all program activities and on any problems that may arise related to the project (such as schools that withdraw, difficulties with in-country partners, etc). ECA and the NEA regional bureau must be copied on all communications with U.S. Embassies. ECA and U.S. Embassies must approve all in-country partners and overseas schools.
- U.S. Embassies should be provided with opportunities to meet with program participants at schools and youth centers in the partner countries and be included in relevant video conferences and online discussions.

Budget Submission

The amount of ECA funding for the FY15 Stevens Initiative is \$4,000,000.

Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) regarding guidelines for a budget submission. An explanatory budget narrative must also be included.

Proposed funding would support the following:

- Staff and participant travel (including regional travel for staff of in-country partners to conduct trainings/manage activities in neighboring countries). All travel must follow State Department travel guidelines.
- Website development and support
- Stipends or other benefits for U.S. and overseas participants directly involved in the program
- Honoraria
- Educational or project materials
- Training modules (including expenses related to any in-person training)
- Curriculum Development/Integration
- Online Professional Development
- Promotional or outreach activities
- Software or supplies such as digital cameras, flip-cams, webcams, etc. to support online project work. Applicants should primarily seek out donations or acquisition of equipment through outside sources
- Internet access fees*
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Justifiable expenses directly related to program activities
- Administrative expenses: The award funds may be used to pay reasonable costs for program administration, technical support, and other administrative needs. Cost sharing in these areas is strongly encouraged.

* Internet access fees may only be included on a limited basis and should be justified within the proposal.

Outreach and Publicity

The award recipient will work in close cooperation with ECA to develop a broad strategy for U.S. publicity and outreach to a diverse range of qualified U.S. organizations that will encourage a large number of subaward applicants for the U.S. government-funded open competition. The award recipient will present the strategy to ECA for approval prior to implementation. Most outreach should be conducted virtually. Funding should not be requested for outreach travel or attendance at conferences.

The award recipient should develop a media strategy to publicize the Stevens Initiative through local, national, and international media via written materials, electronic communication, social media, and other means. The material should highlight the role of the U.S. government and the Department of State in the Stevens Initiative. The publicity strategy and all publication materials must be submitted to ECA for approval prior to publication and dissemination. Please see D.31. Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients in the NOFO for further information.

The award recipient should maintain the Stevens Initiative website (www.stevensinitiative.org) to present the unified mission of the J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative. Through this website, the award recipient should develop information, including application instructions, for interested U.S. subaward applicants about the U.S.-funded competition. Selected projects and progress reports should be posted on this website as the activities of the Initiative take place. ECA may request the addition or removal of material from the website. The website, and all other related online program material, should highlight the U.S. Government's and the Department of State's role as an Initiative founding partner.

All print and online materials provided to applicant organizations, the media, overseas partners, and selection committee members should be submitted to ECA for approval prior to distribution.

Any communication involving revisions to program policy or guidelines should be cleared by ECA prior to dissemination.

II.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

Program reporting:

The award recipient should develop, in consultation with ECA, a plan to monitor and assess the quality and effectiveness of awarded proposals. This plan should also include information about fiscal management. The plan should outline how awarded organizations will report outcomes on a quarterly and annual basis. The award recipient should develop a standardized, online reporting mechanism to ensure consistency of reporting from subaward recipients.

The award recipient will provide program reports containing information about significant activities and accomplishments of program activities to ECA on a quarterly basis. The award recipient will also provide ad-hoc program updates, as requested by ECA.

The award recipient will provide fiscal management reports, on a quarterly basis, detailing program expenditures.

PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Applicants should submit a complete and thorough proposal describing the program in a convincing and comprehensive manner. Since there is no opportunity for applicants to meet with reviewing officials, the proposal should respond to the criteria set forth in the solicitation and other guidelines as clearly as possible.

Proposals should address succinctly, but completely, the elements described below and must follow all format requirements.

NOTE: Proposals submitted through Grants.gov may only be submitted in the following formats:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF)
- ASCII Text
- Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG images)

Proposals should include the following items under the section headings in the GrantSolutions Application Checklist:

Online Forms

- SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance"
- SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs
- SF-424B, "Assurances - Nonconstruction Programs"
- Include other attachments, if applicable, such as indirect agreements, form 990, SF-LLL, etc.

Program Narrative

Executive Summary (One page)

In one double-spaced page, provide the following information about the project:

1. Name of organization/participating institutions
2. Beginning and ending dates of the program
3. Proposed theme
4. Nature of activity
5. Funding level requested from the Bureau, total program cost, total cost-sharing from applicant and other sources
6. Scope and Goals
 - a. Number and description of participants
 - b. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
 - c. Geographic diversity of program, both U.S. and overseas
 - d. Fields covered
 - e. Anticipated results (short and long-term)

Narrative

In 20 double-spaced, single-sided pages, provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below.

1. Vision (statement of need, objectives, goals, benefits)
2. Participating Organizations
3. Program Activities (advertisement, recruitment, orientation, academic component, cultural program, participant monitoring)
4. Program Evaluation
5. Follow-on

6. Project Management
7. Work Plan/Time Frame

Additional Information to be Submitted

- Detailed Budget
- Calendar of activities/itinerary
- Letters of endorsement
- Resumes and CVs (resumes of all new staff should be included in the submission; no resume should exceed two pages.)
- First Time Applicant Attachments, if applicable.

Please note: All applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.
- Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

As part of final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one- page description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

ADHERENCE TO ALL REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE J VISA

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is the official program sponsor of the exchange program covered by this NOFO, and an employee of the Bureau will be the "Responsible Officer" for the program under the terms of 22 CFR 62, which covers the administration of the Exchange Visitor Program (J visa program). Under the terms of 22 CFR 62, organizations receiving awards (either a

grant or cooperative agreement) under this NOFO will be third parties "cooperating with or assisting the sponsor in the conduct of the sponsor's program." The actions of recipient organizations shall be "imputed to the sponsor in evaluating the sponsor's compliance with" 22 CFR 62. Therefore, the Bureau expects that any organization receiving an award under this competition will render all assistance necessary to enable the Bureau to fully comply with 22 CFR 62 et seq.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the secure and proper administration of Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by recipient organizations and program participants to all regulations governing the J visa program status. Therefore, proposals should explicitly state in writing that the applicant is prepared to assist the Bureau in meeting all requirements governing the administration of Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62. If your organization has experience as a designated Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor, the applicant should discuss their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et. seq., including the oversight of their Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of ECA will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program that are funded by the USG.

A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division
U.S. Department of State
SA-44, Suite 668
301 4th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20547

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The NOFO indicates the date the complete proposal is due and the manner in which proposals must be submitted. There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this deadline. For further information regarding this program or the competition, contact Brent Beemer at (202) 632-6163, Office of Citizen Exchanges; Fax: (202) 632-9329; email: beemerbt@state.gov.